St Michael

LITTLE BOOKS OF DELIGHT

Chocolate Cakes

POLLY TYRER

FAMILY CHOCOLATE CAKE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 15 minutes for decoration

275g (10oz) soft brown sugar
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
150ml (¼pt) water
225g (8oz) plain flour
2 level tsp baking powder
½tsp bicarbonate of soda
½tsp salt
100g (4oz) butter
2 eggs, beaten
1tsp vanilla essence
1×150ml (5fl. oz) carton soured cream

FOR THE TOPPING
50g (2oz) plain chocolate
2tsp warm water
50g (2oz) softened butter
100g (4oz) icing sugar

1 Grease a 20cm (8in.) cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Put 75g (3oz) of the brown sugar into a pan with the cocoa and water. Stir over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved and simmer gently for 2 minutes. Cool.
3 Sift together the flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and salt.
4 Cream the remaining sugar with the butter until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs and vanilla essence.
5 Fold in half the cocoa mixture, then half the dry ingredients and then half the soured cream. Repeat.
6 Turn into the prepared tin and bake for 1 hour or until a skewer emerges dry when stuck into the middle. Turn out, and cool on a wire rack.
7 To make the topping: put the chocolate and water into a small pan and melt over a low heat. Cool. Beat the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy, and then beat in the cooled chocolate.
8 Spread the mixture over the top of the cake, marking a pattern with a knife.

THIRTY MINUTE CHOCOLATE CAKE

Preparation time 10 minutes plus 5 minutes for decoration

100g (4oz) soft tub margarine
100g (4oz) caster sugar
2 eggs, beaten
One 150ml (5fl. oz) carton natural yoghurt
75 g (3 oz) self-raising flour
1 level tsp baking powder
25g (1oz) cocoa powder

FOR THE FILLING
2-3tbsp chocolate and hazelnut spread
1tbsp icing sugar

1 Grease two 18cm (7in.) sandwich tins and line the base of both with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2 Place the margarine, caster sugar, eggs and natural yoghurt together in a large mixing bowl.
3 Sift in the flour, baking powder and cocoa powder and beat thoroughly until smooth and fluffy.
4 Divide evenly between the prepared tins and bake for 20–25 minutes or until the cakes feel firm to the fingertips. Leave the cakes to cool in the tins, then turn on to a wire rack and peel off the lining paper.
5 Sandwich the cakes together with the chocolate and hazelnut spread and dust the top with icing sugar.

CHOCOLATE CHUNK RING

Preparation time 15 minutes

100g (4oz) butter
75g (3oz) caster sugar
25g (1oz) soft brown sugar
1 egg, beaten
1tsp vanilla essence
125g (5oz) self-raising flour, sifted
175g (6oz) plain chocolate, coarsely chopped

1 Grease an 18cm (7in.) ring mould and line the base with a circle of greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Cream together the butter and sugars until light and fluffy.
3 Beat in the egg and vanilla essence. Gently fold in the flour, adding a little water if necessary.
4 Stir in the chopped chocolate. Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for 40 minutes, or until the cake feels firm when pressed with the fingertips. Cool briefly, then turn the cake out of the mould on to a wire rack.

CHOCOLATE CHIP AND BANANA LOAF

Preparation time 20 minutes

100g (4oz) butter
225g (8oz) caster sugar
Grated rind of 1 orange
½tsp vanilla essence
2 eggs, beaten
225g (8oz) plain flour
2 level tsp baking powder
150ml (¼pt) milk
2 ripe bananas, mashed
100g (4oz) plain chocolate, chopped

1 · Grease a 500g (1lb) loaf tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 · Beat together the butter, sugar and orange rind until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla essence.
3 · Gradually beat in the eggs, a little at a time.
4 · Sift together the flour and baking powder. Mix the milk with the mashed banana.
5 · Add half the dry ingredients to the mixture, followed by half the mashed banana and milk. Repeat. Lastly, stir in the chopped chocolate.
6 · Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for 40–50 minutes, or until the cake is golden brown and feels firm when pressed with the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.

CHOCOLATE, CHERRY AND NUT CAKE

Preparation time 15 minutes

100g (4oz) butter
200g (7oz) self-raising flour
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
100g (4oz) soft brown sugar
100g (4oz) glacé cherries, washed and halved
100g (4oz) assorted nuts, coarsely chopped
1 egg, beaten
1tbsp golden syrup
150ml (¼pt) milk and water, mixed half and half

FOR THE TOP
100g (4oz) glacé cherries, halved
A few whole nuts

1 Grease an 18cm (7in.) cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Rub the butter into the flour, using the fingertips, until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
3 Sift in the cocoa powder and add the sugar, 100g (4oz) cherries and mixed nuts.
4 Bind the mixture with the beaten egg, golden syrup and enough of the milk and water to form a consistency that will fall easily when lifted with a spoon.
5 Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and arrange the halved cherries and nuts on the top. Bake for 1-1½ hours, or until a skewer will emerge dry when stuck into the middle. Cool on a wire rack.

MARBLE RING CAKE

Preparation time 25 minutes plus 10 minutes for decoration

100g (4oz) plain flour
½ level tsp baking powder
2 eggs, separated
175g (6oz) caster sugar
150ml (¼pt) milk
50g (2oz) unsalted butter, melted but cool
Vanilla essence
25g (1oz) cocoa powder

FOR DECORATION
50g (2oz) plain chocolate
2tsp water

1 Grease an 18cm (7in.) ring mould and line the base with a circle of greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Sift the flour and baking powder together.
3 Beat the egg yolks with half the sugar until pale, mousse-like and thick.
4 Beat the egg whites until stiff and gradually beat in the remaining sugar, a spoonful at a time.
5 Carefully mix half the milk, then half the flour, then half the melted butter into the egg yolk mixture. Repeat. Gently fold in the beaten egg whites, taking care not to overmix.
6 Divide the cake mixture in half. Add a few drops of vanilla essence to one half. Sift the cocoa powder and then fold it into the other half.
7 Put assorted spoonfuls of chocolate and vanilla mixture into the ring mould and bake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until the top feels firm when pressed with the fingertips. Turn out and cool on a wire rack.
8 To decorate: put the chocolate and water together in a small pan and melt over a low heat. Place the melted chocolate into a piping bag fitted with a medium writing nozzle and pipe in zig-zags over the top of the cake.

CHOCOLATE AND GINGER LOAF

Preparation time 15 minutes

100g (4oz) soft brown sugar
75g (3oz) butter
100g (4oz) golden syrup
2tbsp ginger marmalade
220g (7oz) self-raising flour
¼tsp bicarbonate of soda
½tsp ground ginger
½tsp mixed spice
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
150ml (¼pt) milk
1 egg, beaten

1 Grease a 500g (1lb) loaf tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Put the brown sugar, butter, syrup and marmalade together in a small heavy-based pan. Set over a low heat and melt slowly, without boiling, until the sugar has dissolved. Cool a little.
3 Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda, ginger, mixed spice and cocoa powder into a large mixing bowl. Make a well in the centre.
4 Mix half the milk and all the beaten egg into the melted syrup mixture. Slowly beat this into the flour, a little at a time, drawing the dry ingredients from the sides and mixing to a smooth thick batter. Add the remaining milk, if necessary.
5 Turn into the prepared loaf tin and bake for 1 hour. The cake should feel slightly tacky but firm. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes before turning on to a wire rack.

CHOCOLATE AND ORANGE CAKE

Preparation time 25 minutes plus 15 minutes for decoration

75g (3oz) plain chocolate
350g (12oz) soft brown sugar
300ml (½pt) milk
100g (4oz) butter
Grated rind of half an orange
2 eggs
Vanilla essence
100g (4oz) plain flour
1 level tsp bicarbonate of soda

FOR THE FILLING
300ml (½pt) double cream, whipped
Grated rind of half an orange
Caster sugar to taste

FOR DECORATION
2 chocolate-covered nougat and caramel bars
4tbsp milk
1 orange

1 · Grease three 18cm (7in.) sandwich tins and line the bases with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2 · Put the chocolate, half the sugar and half the milk into a pan and stir over a low heat until the chocolate has melted and the mixture is smooth. Leave to cool.
3 · Beat together the butter with the rest of the sugar and the orange rind until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs and add the vanilla essence.
4 · Add the chocolate mixture and beat again. Sift in the flour and bicarbonate of soda, and mix well to get rid of all the lumps. Pour in the remaining milk and stir.
5 · Divide the mixture between the three tins and bake for 30 minutes. The cakes should have shrunk away from the sides of the tins. Cool before turning on to a wire rack. Peel off the paper.
6 · To make the filling: mix the orange rind with the whipped cream and sweeten to taste with the caster sugar. Use this to sandwich together the three layers.
7 · To make the decoration: remove the rind from the orange, taking care not to remove any pith. Cut the rind into the finest shreds. Plunge them into boiling water, then immediately into cold water. Drain and pat dry on absorbent paper.
8 · Slice the chocolate bars and melt them over a low heat with the milk, stirring until the mixture is smooth. Spread over the top of the cake and leave to set. Sprinkle the orange rind round the edge before serving.

BISHOP'S SPONGE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 20 minutes for decoration

3 eggs
75g (3oz) caster sugar
50g (2oz) plain flour
25g (1oz) cocoa powder

FOR THE FILLING
50g (2oz) unsalted butter
50g (2oz) icing sugar, sifted
2tbsp condensed milk

FOR THE TOPPING
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
2tbsp water
25g (1oz) butter

1 Grease a 18cm (7in.) round cake tin, line the base with greased greaseproof paper and dust with flour and caster sugar. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Whisk the eggs and sugar together in a large mixing bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Whisk the mixture until light, thick and fluffy. Remove the bowl from the heat and continue to whisk until the mixture is cool.
3 Sift the flour and cocoa powder together. With a large metal spoon or spatula, carefully fold into the mixture.
4 Turn into the prepared tin and bake for 30 minutes. The cake will look crinkly at the edges and feel spongy to the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.
5 To make the filling: soften the butter, then beat in the icing sugar and condensed milk until the mixture is light and fluffy.
6 Split the cake in half and sandwich together with the filling.
7 To make the topping: place a double piece of greaseproof paper tightly around the edge of the cake and secure with a paper clip. The paper should stand up at least 2cm (1in.) above the top of the cake. Melt the chocolate with the water in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Beat in the butter. Pour this mixture over the top of the cake. As the chocolate cools swirl it with a knife. Leave to harden in a cool place.
8 Carefully remove the paper collar before serving.

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH HOT FUDGE SAUCE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 20 minutes for decoration

175g (6oz) butter
100g (4oz) caster sugar
2tbsp golden syrup
3 eggs, beaten
125g (5oz) self-raising flour
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
100g (4oz) plain chocolate, grated
150ml (¼pt) milk

FOR THE FILLING
175g (6oz) good quality cream cheese
1tbsp milk
Icing sugar to taste

FOR THE HOT FUDGE SAUCE
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
1tbsp golden syrup
50g (2oz) butter
2tsp brandy
2tbsp milk

1 Grease an 18cm (7in.) cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2 Beat the butter, sugar and golden syrup together until light and fluffy.
3 Gradually beat in the eggs, a little at a time.
4 Sift the flour and the cocoa powder together and gently fold into the mixture.
5 Stir in the grated chocolate and add enough milk to make the mixture fall easily from a lifted spoon. Turn into the prepared tin and bake for 1 hour, or until the cake feels firm to the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.
6 To make the filling: soften the cream cheese with milk and sweeten to taste with the icing sugar.
7 To make the Hot Fudge Sauce: put all the ingredients together in a pan and place over a low heat. Stir until the chocolate has melted and the mixture is smooth.
8 Split the cake in half and sandwich together with the cream cheese mixture. Cut into large wedges and each one with a heaped tablespoonful of the hot sauce.

MRS SHORT'S CHOCOLATE CAKE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 15 minutes for decoration

100g (4oz) butter
100g (4oz) caster sugar
Grated rind of 1 orange and 1 lemon
50g (2oz) drinking chocolate
100g (4oz) ground almonds
2 eggs, beaten
1tbsp brandy
50g (2oz) self-raising flour

TO FINISH THE CAKE
2tbsp chunky orange marmalade
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
2tsp hot water
Knob of butter

1 Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Brush an 18cm (7in.) loaf tin lightly with oil and dust with flour.
2 Put the butter, sugar and fruit rinds together in a large mixing bowl and beat until they are light and fluffy.
3 Stir in the drinking chocolate and ground almonds. Mix well.
4 Beat the eggs into the mixture, a little at a time. Add the brandy.
5 Gently fold in the flour.
6 Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake in the oven for 50 minutes, or until the cake feels firm when pressed with the fingertips. Turn on to a wire rack and leave to cool.
7 To finish the cake: warm the marmalade with a little water. Separate the large chunks of rind and set aside. Brush the rest of the marmalade over the top and sides of the cake. Break the chocolate into small pieces and put it in a small pan together with the water. Melt it over a low heat, then stir in the butter. Pour over the cake and allow to set. Decorate the top with the chunks of marmalade rind.

FEATHER ICED CHOCOLATE AND COFFEE VICTORIA SANDWICH

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 30 minutes for decoration

175g (6oz) soft tub margarine
175g (6oz) caster sugar
3 eggs, beaten
125g (5oz) self-raising flour
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
Water

FOR THE FILLING
50g (2oz) unsalted butter
100g (4oz) icing sugar, sifted
2tsp instant coffee powder dissolved in 1 tbsp boiling water

FOR THE FEATHER ICING
175g (6oz) icing sugar, sifted
Boiling water
1tbsp cocoa powder, sifted
1tsp instant coffee powder dissolved in boiling water

1 Grease two 18cm (7in.) sandwich tins and line the bases with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2 Beat the margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs.
3 Sift the flour and cocoa powder together and fold into the mixture. Add enough water to form a consistency that will fall easily from a lifted spoon.
4 Divide the mixture between the prepared tins and bake for 20-25 minutes, or until the cakes feel firm to the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.
5 To make the filling: soften the butter, then gradually beat in the icing sugar and coffee until the mixture is light and fluffy. Sandwich the cakes together.
6 To make the feather icing: mix the icing sugar with enough boiling water to form a consistency that will make a trail for a few minutes when dropped from a spoon but will gradually merge back into the rest of the icing.
7 Take 1tbsp of the icing and colour it with a little of the instant coffee. Place it in a piping bag fitted with a fine writing nozzle. Colour the remaining icing with the cocoa powder and spread it evenly over the top of the cake.
8 While the icing is still wet, quickly pipe lines, about 2.5cm (1in.) apart, across the top of the cake. Using a pin, draw lines at right angles to the piped lines, alternately in opposite directions, drawing them into points. Leave to set.

DEVIL'S FOOD CAKE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 20 minutes for decoration

150ml (¼pt) milk
75g (3oz) plain chocolate, chopped
225g (8oz) soft brown sugar
100g (4oz) butter
2 eggs, separated
225g (8oz) plain flour
1tsp bicarbonate of soda

FOR THE FROSTING
275g (10oz) caster sugar
2 egg whites
4tbsp hot water
Pinch cream of tartar

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CARAQUE
100g (4oz) plain chocolate

1 Grease an 18cm (7in.) cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 160°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.
2 Gently heat the milk, chocolate and half the sugar in a small pan until the chocolate has melted and the sugar dissolved. Leave to cool.
3 Cream the butter with the remaining sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg yolks one at a time.
4 Sift the flour with the bicarbonate of soda. Add half to the creamed mixture, followed by half the chocolate. Repeat. Stir in the vanilla essence.
5 Whisk the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Stir one spoonful into the mixture and then carefully fold in the remaining whites.
6 Turn into the prepared tin and bake for 1 hour, or until the cake is well risen and feels firm to the fingertips. Leave to cool a little, then turn on to a wire rack.
7 To make the frosting: put all the ingredients in a large bowl and place over a pan of simmering water. Whisk until thick and meringue-like.
8 Split the cake into three. Quickly use half the frosting to sandwich the cakes together and half to coat the top and sides, swirling the frosting with a knife and pulling it up into peaks.
9 To make the caraque: melt the chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Spread it thinly over a sheet of greaseproof paper and leave to set. Using both hands, drag a sharp rigid knife over the surface to shave off curls. Scatter the caraque on top of the cake.

RASPBERRY TORTE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 40 minutes for decoration

100g (4oz) plain chocolate
4 eggs, separated
175g (6oz) caster sugar
125g (5oz) plain flour, sifted

FOR THE FILLING
225g (8oz) frozen raspberries
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped and sweetened
2tbsp kirsch

FOR DECORATION
100g (4oz) plain chocolate, chopped
300ml (½pt) double cream, whipped

1 Grease a 20cm (8in.) round cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Dust with flour. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Melt the chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Cool a little.
3 Place the egg yolks with half the sugar and beat until pale and mousse-like. Beat the egg whites until stiff. Gently fold in the remaining sugar.
4 Using a metal spoon or spatula, fold the egg whites and flour into the mixture. Then fold in the cooled but liquid chocolate.
5 Pour into the prepared tin and bake for 45 minutes, or until the cake is well risen and firm when pressed with the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.
6 Defrost the raspberries, keeping any juice. Pat dry with absorbent paper. Reserve 6 for decoration and mix the rest with the cream. Mix the kirsch with the juice.
7 Split the cake into 3 and place the bottom layer on a plate. Sprinkle with half the juice and kirsch and spread half the cream on top. Cover with the second layer of sponge and the remaining juice and cream. Set the third layer on top.
8 To make the decoration: make 6 small cones out of greaseproof paper. Melt the chocolate over a pan of simmering water. Place a spoonful in each cone and tilt and turn to coat the inside evenly. When set, peel off the paper.
9 Place a spoonful of the cream in a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle. Coat the top and side of the cake with the remaining cream. Pipe a whirl into each cone and arrange them on the cake with the raspberries in between.

CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE TORTE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 40 minutes for decoration

4 eggs
100g (4oz) caster sugar
60g (2½oz) plain flour
40g (1½oz) cornflour
40g (1½oz) cocoa powder
40g (1½oz) butter, melted and cooled

FOR THE FILLING
350g (12oz) plain chocolate
2tsp instant coffee powder dissolved in 2tbsp boiling water
450ml (¾pt) double cream
4tbsp dark rum

FOR DECORATION
100g (4oz) plain chocolate, grated
1tbsp icing sugar
10 rum truffles

1 Grease a 20cm (8in.) round cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2 Whisk the eggs and sugar together in a large mixing bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Continue to whisk until the mixture has doubled in bulk and is thick, pale and mousse-like. Remove from the heat and whisk until cool.
3 Sift together the flours and cocoa powder and gently fold into the mixture.
4 Carefully fold in the cooled but still liquid butter. Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for 35 minutes. The edges should have shrunk away from the sides of the tin. Cool on a wire rack.
5 To prepare the filling: melt the chocolate with the coffee in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Cool a little, then carefully fold into the lightly whipped cream. Reserve half for decoration.
6 Slice the sponge into three layers. Set the base on a serving plate and sprinkle with half the rum. Then cover with a layer of chocolate cream. Set the second layer of cake on top and repeat. Cover with the last layer of sponge.
7 Place a little of the remaining chocolate cream in a piping bag fitted with a large fluted nozzle. Cover the top and sides of the cake with the rest. Sprinkle the top of the cake with the grated chocolate and dust with icing sugar. Pipe 10 whirls of chocolate cream around the edge and top each whirl with a rum truffle.

HAZELNUT TORTE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 40 minutes for decoration

4 eggs
175g (6oz) caster sugar
1tsp vanilla essence
100g (4oz) self-raising flour, sifted
40g (1½oz) browned, ground hazelnuts (see p.00)

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CREAM FILLING
100g (4oz) unsalted butter
25g (1oz) cornflour
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
300ml (½pt) milk
50g (2oz) plain chocolate
100g (4oz) caster sugar

FOR DECORATION
125g (5oz) granulated sugar
1tbsp water
2tbsp browned, ground hazelnuts
6 whole hazelnuts

1 Set the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6. Line three baking sheets with greased greaseproof paper. Mark five 18cm (7in.) circles on the paper.

2 Put the eggs and sugar together in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water and beat until pale, fluffy and thick. Fold in the vanilla essence, flour and ground hazelnuts. Spread the mixture on the five circles and bake for 10-12 minutes, until firm and pale brown. Cool on a wire rack and peel off the paper.

3 To make the filling: cream the butter until light and fluffy. Mix the cornflour and cocoa with enough milk to make a smooth paste. Put the chocolate and remaining milk in a pan, bring to the boil. Pour on to the cornflour and cocoa mixture. Return to the pan and simmer for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the sugar. Cool, then gradually beat the custard into the butter. Use to sandwich together four of the cake layers, finishing with a layer of filling. Reserve enough for the sides.

5 To decorate: put the top layer on a wire rack standing over an oiled baking sheet. Place the sugar and water in a heavy-based pan and melt over a low heat to a golden caramel. Oil a sharp knife. Pour the caramel evenly over the cake and quickly mark it into 6 portions with the knife before it sets.

7 Put the caramel layer on top of the others. Put a little of the chocolate cream into a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle. Spread the rest around the sides of the cake and press on the ground hazelnuts. Pipe a whirl of cream on each marked portion and place a whole hazelnut on each whirl.

SACHER TORTE

Preparation time 25 minutes plus 15 minutes for decoration

175g (6oz) plain chocolate
175g (6oz) butter, softened
175g (6oz) caster sugar
5 eggs, separated
5ml (1tsp) vanilla essence
100g (4oz) plain flour, sifted

FOR THE CHOCOLATE GLAZE
3 tbsp double cream
175g (6oz) plain chocolate, grated
15g (½oz) butter, softened

1 Grease a 20cm (8in.) cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Dust lightly with flour. Set the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
2 Melt the chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Allow to cool a little.
3 Beat the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg yolks one at a time. Stir in the cooled but still melted chocolate and the vanilla essence. Lightly fold in the flour.
4 Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Using a large metal spoon or spatula, fold 1 spoonful of the egg whites into the chocolate mixture. Then fold in the remaining whites.
5 Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for 50 minutes, or until the cake feels firm to the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.
6 To make the chocolate glaze: bring the cream to just boiling point. Put the chocolate into a mixing bowl. Pour over the hot cream and stir constantly until the chocolate has melted. Beat in the butter.
7 Place the cake on a wire rack over a sheet of greaseproof paper. Before the chocolate glaze has time to set, use it to coat the top and sides of the cake. (Do not be tempted to lift any of the glaze that has dripped on to the greaseproof paper back on to the cake as it will be full of crumbs.)

CHOCOLATE PRALINE MERINGUE CAKE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 45 for decoration

FOR THE MERINGUE
3 egg whites
100g (4oz) caster sugar
50g (2oz) drinking chocolate

FOR THE PRALINE FILLING
50g (2oz) unblanched almonds
50g (2oz) granulated sugar
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped

FOR THE CHOCOLATE GANACHE
300ml (½pt) double cream
125g (5oz) plain chocolate, chopped

1. Line three baking trays with silicone paper and draw an 18cm (7in.) circle on each one. Set the oven to 180°C/250°F/Gas Mark 1.
2. Whisk the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Add half the caster sugar and continue to beat until the egg whites are stiff and shiny.
3. Fold in the remaining sugar and the drinking chocolate. Spread the mixture on to the three circles marked on the paper.
4. Bake for 3 hours until the meringues are quite dry. Cool and remove the paper.
5. To make the filling: place the almonds and sugar in a heavy-based pan and set it over a low heat until the sugar has browned and caramelized. Turn on to an oiled baking sheet. Before the caramel has set, use a wooden spoon to separate a few whole coated almonds and reserve them for decoration.
6. When the praline is cold and brittle, grind it in a liquidiser or food processor. Stir into the whipped cream.
7. To make the chocolate ganache: bring the double cream slowly to the boil, remove from the heat and stir in the chopped chocolate until it has completely dissolved. Cool for about 15 minutes, whisking occasionally, and then whisk until thick and creamy.
8. To assemble the cake: sandwich the meringue layers together with the praline cream. Place a little of the ganache in a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle. Spread the rest over the top and sides of the meringue. Pipe whirls of ganache on top and decorate each one with a whole caramel almond.

CHOCOLATE BRANDY CAKE

Preparation time 15 minutes plus 15 for decoration

225g (8oz) plain chocolate
225g (8oz) butter
2 eggs
25g (1oz) caster sugar
225g (8oz) digestive biscuits, lightly crushed
75g (3oz) mixed nuts, coarsely chopped
75g (3oz) mixed glacé cherries and sultanas, finely chopped
4tbsp brandy

FOR DECORATION
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped
12 walnuts

1 Line a 15cm (6in.) soufflé dish with tin foil.
2 Put the chocolate and butter in a small saucepan and melt slowly over a low heat. Cool.
3 Beat the eggs and sugar together until frothy.
4 Mix the chocolate and butter with the eggs and stir in all the remaining ingredients.
5 Pour into the prepared dish and refrigerate until set, preferably overnight.
6 Turn the cake on to a serving plate and peel off the tin foil. Put the whipped cream into a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle and pipe whirls of cream around the base of the cake. Decorate with walnuts.

CHOCOLATE BRANDY CAKE

Preparation time 15 minutes plus 15 for decoration

225g (8oz) plain chocolate
225g (8oz) butter
2 eggs
25g (1oz) caster sugar
225g (8oz) digestive biscuits, lightly crushed
75g (3oz) mixed nuts, coarsely chopped
75g (3oz) mixed glacé cherries and sultanas, finely chopped
4tbsp brandy

FOR DECORATION
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped
12 walnuts

1 · Line a 15cm (6in.) soufflé dish with tin foil.
2 · Put the chocolate and butter in a small saucepan and melt slowly over a low heat. Cool.
3 · Beat the eggs and sugar together until frothy.
4 · Mix the chocolate and butter with the eggs and stir in all the remaining ingredients.
5 · Pour into the prepared dish and refrigerate until set, preferably overnight.
6 · Turn the cake on to a serving plate and peel off the tin foil. Put the whipped cream into a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle and pipe whirls of cream around the base of the cake. Decorate with walnuts.

CHOCOLATE AND CHESTNUT BISCUIT CAKE

Preparation time 15 minutes plus 15 for decoration

3tbsp milk
2tbsp sherry
225g (8oz) sweetened chestnut purée (tinned)
15 plain rectangular biscuits
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
2tsp water
25g (1oz) butter, softened
5 walnut halves

1 · Mix the milk and sherry together. If the chestnut purée is very hard, turn it into a bowl and beat to soften it.
2 · Soak 3 of the biscuits in the milk and sherry and place them side by side on a serving dish. Spread half the whipped cream on top.
3 · Soak 3 more biscuits and place them on top of the whipped cream. Spread these with half the chestnut purée. Repeat these two layers, ending with biscuits.
4 · Melt the chocolate with the water in a small pan set over a low heat. Beat in the butter.
5 · Pour the chocolate over the biscuits and when nearly set, decorate with the walnut halves.
6 · Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

CHOCOLATE, HONEY AND HAZELNUT SHORTCAKE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 40 minutes for decoration

75g (3oz) hazelnuts
100g (4oz) butter
60g (2½oz) caster sugar
125g (5oz) plain flour, sifted

FOR DECORATION
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
2tsp water
15g (½oz) butter

FOR THE FILLING
300ml (½pt) double cream, whipped
2tbsp runny honey

1 Toast the nuts in a hot oven. When they are dark brown, rub in a dry tea towel to remove the skins. Reserve 6 nuts for decoration and grind the rest.
2 Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3 Fold the flour gently into the mixture. Add the ground hazelnuts.
4 Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
5 Divide the paste into three. Place each third on a baking sheet and, using the fingertips, press out into thin flat rounds of approximately 18cm (7in.) diameter. Chill for 30 minutes.
6 Bake the shortcakes for 10–12 minutes. Allow to cool a little, then use a palette knife to loosen them from the baking sheet. Quickly cut one into 6 portions (they will become crisp as they cool).
7 To make the decoration: melt the chocolate and water together in a pan set over a low heat. Stir in the butter. Set the cut portions of shortcake on wire rack over a piece of greaseproof paper. Coat each portion with the melted chocolate. Allow to set.
8 To make the filling: mix the whipped cream and honey together, place a little in a piping bag fitted with a large fluted nozzle. Use half the remaining cream to sandwich together the 2 whole shortcakes and spread the other half on top.
9 Set the portions of chocolate-coated shortcake into the cream, placing each at a slight angle. Pipe a whirl of honey cream on top of each portion and decorate each whirl with a whole hazelnut.

RUM AND RAISIN CHOUX RING

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 20 minutes for decoration

FOR THE CHOUX PASTRY
75g (3oz) butter
220ml (7½fl. oz) water
100g (4oz) plain flour, sifted
3 eggs, beaten

FOR THE FILLING
300ml (½pt) whipped cream
Icing sugar to taste
100g (4oz) raisins soaked in 2tbsp dark rum

FOR THE ICING
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
1tsp golden syrup
15g (½oz) butter
2tsp dark rum

1 Set the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6. Wet a baking sheet.
2 Put the butter and the water together in a pan and bring slowly to the boil. Immediately the liquid boils, tip all the flour in at once, remove from the heat and beat the mixture with a wooden spoon until it becomes thick and leaves the sides of the pan. Cool.
3 Beat in the eggs, a little at a time, until the paste is smooth and shiny. It may not be necessary to add all the egg. The mixture should fall easily from a lifted spoon.
4 Put the choux pastry into a piping bag fitted with a large plain nozzle and pipe it on to the baking sheet in a circle about 15cm (6in.) in diameter. Bake for about 30 minutes until brown and crisp.
5 While still warm, split the choux ring in half, scrape out any uncooked paste and discard. Cool on a wire rack.
6 To make the filling: sweeten the whipped cream with the icing sugar and stir in the soaked raisins. Use to sandwich the choux ring together.
7 To make the icing: put all the ingredients in a small pan and melt slowly over a low heat, stirring occasionally. Pour over the filled choux ring and leave to set.

TIPSY CAKE

Preparation time 25 minutes plus 20 minutes for decoration plus 2 hours for the syrup to soak into the cake

125g (5oz) soft margarine
75g (3oz) caster sugar
5 eggs, separated
125g (5oz) plain chocolate, grated
125g (5oz) ground almonds

FOR THE SYRUP
50g (2oz) granulated sugar
2tsp instant coffee powder
150ml (¼pt) water
2tbsp dark rum

TO SERVE
300ml (½pt) whipped cream
2tsp cinnamon powder

1 · Grease a 20cm (8in.) round cake tin and line the base with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.
2 · Cream the margarine and sugar together until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the egg yolks.
3 · Carefully fold in the grated chocolate and ground almonds.
4 · Whisk the egg whites until stiff but not dry and fold into the chocolate mixture.
5 · Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for about 1 hour or until the cake feels firm to the fingertips.
6 · To make the syrup: put the sugar, coffee and water together in a heavy-based pan and set over a low heat. Allow the sugar to dissolve, then simmer until the syrup feels sticky. Cool a little, then add the rum.
7 · Place the cake in an ovenproof serving dish and prick all over with a fork or skewer. Spoon the syrup over the cake a little at a time until it has all been absorbed. Leave to stand for at least 2 hours.
8 · To serve the cake: set the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3. Warm the cake for about 15 minutes. Meanwhile fold the cinnamon powder into the whipped cream. Serve the cake immediately with the whipped cream handed separately.

RICH CHOCOLATE AND GINGER CHRISTMAS LOG

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 30 minutes for decoration

225g (8oz) plain chocolate
1tsp strong instant coffee
3tbsp water
5 eggs, separated
125g (5oz) caster sugar

FOR THE FILLING
2 heaped tbsp ginger marmalade
4tbsp advocaat liqueur (optional)
300ml (½pt) double cream, whipped

FOR DECORATION
1tbsp icing sugar
Christmas decorations

1 Line a large roasting tin with greaseproof paper. Brush it lightly with oil and dust with flour and caster sugar. Set the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.
2 Put the chocolate, coffee and water into a heavy-based pan and melt slowly over a low heat.
3 Beat the egg yolks and sugar together until pale and mousse-like. Whisk the egg whites until stiff but not dry.
4 Stir the melted chocolate into the egg yolks. Mix a spoonful of the beaten egg whites into the mixture, then carefully fold in the remaining whites.
5 Spread the mixture evenly into the prepared tin and bake for 12 minutes until the top is dry and firm to touch. Cover immediately with a damp tea towel and leave to cool, preferably overnight.
6 To make the filling: fold the ginger marmalade and advocaat into the whipped cream.
7 To assemble the log: lay a sheet of greaseproof paper on the work surface. Turn the chocolate cake on to the paper and peel off the lining. Spread with the ginger filling and roll up like a Swiss roll, using the greaseproof paper to help you. Just before serving, dust with icing sugar and add the Christmas decorations.

If preferred, the Christmas log may be filled with plain whipped cream or whipped cream flavoured with coffee essence.

FAIRY CASTLE CAKE

Preparation time 25 minutes plus 1 hour for decoration

Double quantities of the ingredients for the Victoria Sandwich (p.26)

FOR THE ICING
100g (4oz) plain chocolate
225g (8oz) unsalted butter
350g (12oz) icing sugar
2 egg yolks

FOR DECORATION
1×25cm (10in.) cake board
5 flat sweets
1 tube sugar-coated chocolate beans
3 small silver or gold doyleys
Any bought decoration, such as candles, bumble bees, butterflies, or a fairy

1 Collect 3 empty food tins to bake the turrets in, one 450g (1lb) size; one 225g (8oz) size; and one 150g (5oz) size. Wash them and remove the labels. Use a 20cm (8in.) round cake tin for the castle base. Grease all the tins and line the bases with greased greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.

2 Follow instructions 2-3 for the Victoria Sandwich (p.26). Half fill the food tins with the cake mixture and use the rest to fill the large tin. Bake the small cakes for 20-30 minutes and the large one for approx. 1 hour until well risen and firm when pressed with the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.

3 To make the icing: break the chocolate into pieces and melt in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Allow to cool but not set. Soften the butter, then beat in the icing sugar, egg yolks and cooled chocolate. Beat until light and fluffy.

4 To assemble the cake: split the large cake in half and sandwich together with some of the icing. Set the cake on the board and ice the top and sides.

5 Carefully coat each turret with icing, inserting a fork into the base so that the cake can be held with one hand while spreading the icing with the other. Set each turret on top of the cake, as shown in the photograph.

6 Push the sweets into the icing for windows and arrange the chocolate beans around the base, like crazy paving. Make a cut in each doyley from the outside to the centre, roll them into cones to form roofs for the turrets and secure.

BUTTERFLY BIRTHDAY CAKE

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 1 hour for decoration

Same quantities of the ingredients for the Raspberry Torte (p.30)

FOR THE FILLING
3tbsp raspberry or black cherry jam
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped

FOR DECORATION
1×30cm (12in.) square cake board
350g (12oz) icing sugar, sifted
Boiling water
Pink food colouring
1 level tbsp cocoa powder, sifted
50g (2oz) marzipan
Gravy browning
Chocolate strands
Candles

1 · Follow instructions 1-5 for Raspberry Torte, using a 18cm (7in.) square cake tin.
2 · Split the cake in half and sandwich together with jam and whipped cream.
3 · Cut the cake in half diagonally. Swop the halves round so that the uncut corners are pointing towards each other and the long cut edges are on the outside. Cut a small triangle off each of the uncut corners that are now in the centre of the butterfly. Remove the triangles. Now cut a small (5cm/2in.) triangle in the middle of each of the long outside edges. Set the cake on a wire rack over a sheet of greaseproof paper.
4 · To decorate: mix the icing sugar with boiling water to form a consistency that will make a trail when dropped from a spoon but will gradually merge back into the rest of the icing. Colour 1 tbsp of the icing pink. Put it in a piping bag fitted with a fine writing nozzle. Colour the rest with the cocoa powder.
5 · Coat the top and sides of the cakes with the chocolate icing. While it is still wet, quickly pipe lines about 2.5cm (1in.) apart, parallel to the long edge. With a pin, draw lines at right angles to the piped lines, fanning them out like the patterns on a butterfly's wings. Leave to set.
6 · Transfer the wings to the cake board, placing them with the short sides together. Colour the marzipan with a little gravy browning, shape it into the head and body and roll in the chocolate strands. Arrange the candles as shown in the photograph.

BONFIRE CAKE

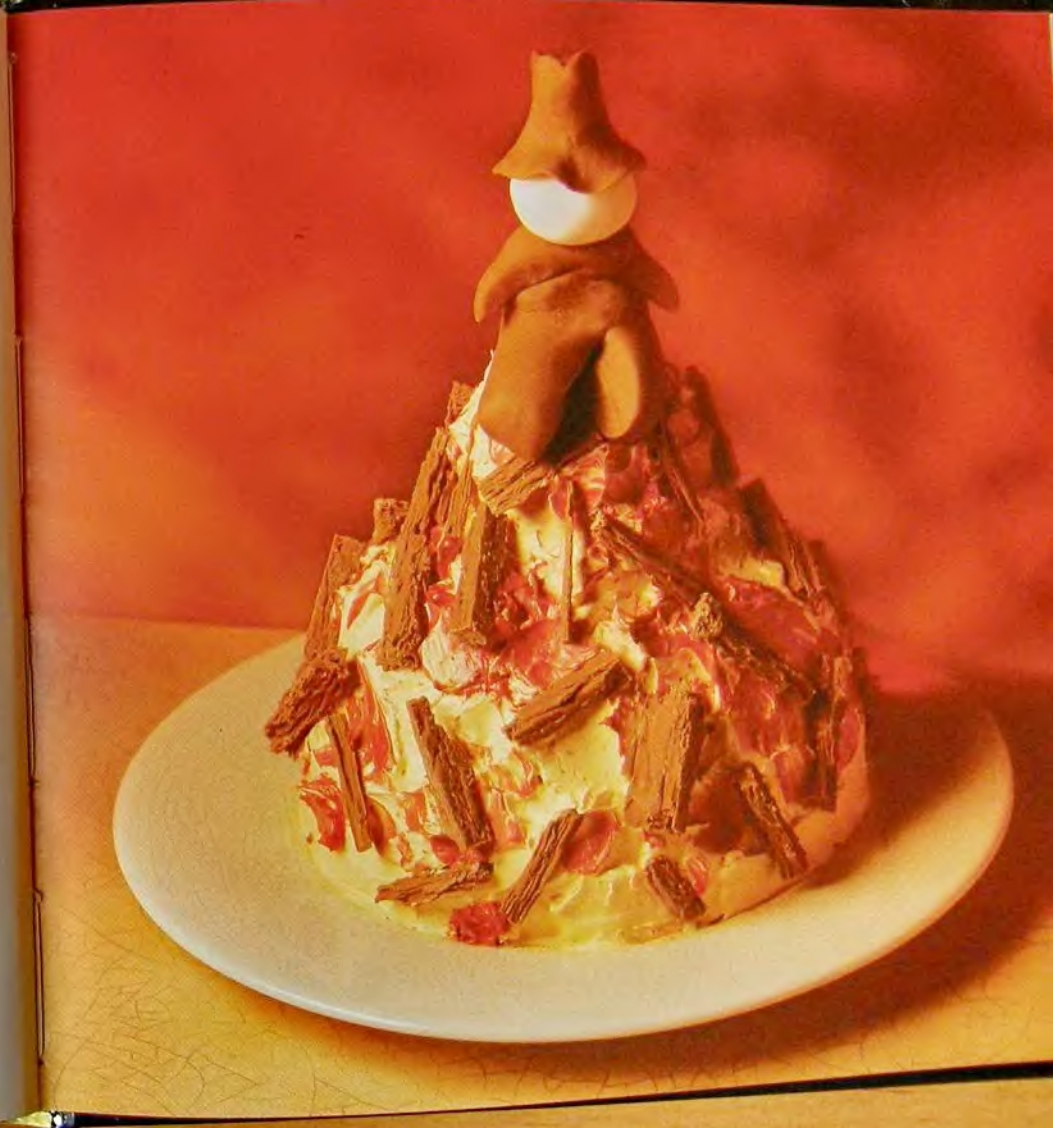
Preparation time 30 minutes plus 30 minutes for decoration

175g (6oz) soft margarine
175g (6oz) caster sugar
3 eggs, beaten
175g (6oz) self-raising flour
25g (1oz) drinking chocolate
Orange food colouring

FOR THE MARSHMALLOW FROSTING
2 egg whites
100g (4oz) icing sugar, sifted
125g (5oz) unsalted butter, softened
Orange and red colouring

FOR DECORATION
8 small chocolate flakes
50g (2 oz) marzipan, coloured brown

1 Grease a 1 litre (2pt) pudding basin and a bun tin. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/ Gas Mark 5.
2 Cream the margarine and sugar together until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs and fold in the flour.
3 Divide the mixture in half. Stir the drinking chocolate into one half and colour the remainder orange.
4 Spoon alternate colours into the pudding basin and the bun tin. Swirl with a skewer to give a curved marble effect. Bake the bun for 15-20 minutes and pudding basin for 1-1½ hours until the cakes feel firm when pressed with the fingertips. Turn out on to a wire rack and cool.
5 To make the marshmallow frosting: put the egg whites and icing sugar in a large bowl over a pan of simmering water. Whisk until thick and mousse-like. Remove from the heat and whisk until cool.
6 Beat the butter until light and fluffy, then gradually beat in the meringue mixture.
7 Split the large cake in half. Sandwich together with some of the frosting and attach the bun on top with another layer of frosting. Divide the remaining frosting in half and colour half red and half orange. Cover the cake in alternate blobs of icing, drawing it into peaks to represent flames.
8 Cut the flakes into 5cm (2in.) pieces and arrange on the cake, like logs. Use the coloured marzipan to make a Guy.



BLACK FOREST BUNS

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 15 minutes for decoration

MAKES ABOUT 18

100g (4oz) soft margarine
100g (4oz) caster sugar
2 eggs, separated
50g (2oz) self-raising flour
25g (1oz) cocoa powder
25g (1oz) ground almonds

FOR DECORATION
150ml (¼pt) double cream, whipped
1tbsp kirsch
1 tin dark morello cherries
25g (1oz) plain chocolate, grated

1 Grease 18 bun tins or line them with paper cases. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2 Beat the margarine and sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg yolks one at a time.
3 Sift the flour and cocoa powder together and gently stir into the mixture with the ground almonds.
4 Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Using a large metal spoon, or spatula, stir one spoonful of the egg whites into the mixture, then carefully fold in the remaining whites.
5 Divide the mixture evenly between the bun tins and bake for 15-20 minutes or until the buns feel firm to the fingertips. Cool on a wire rack.
6 To decorate: mix the whipped cream and kirsch together. Drain the cherries and pat very dry with absorbent paper.
7 Place the cream in a piping bag fitted with a large fluted nozzle. Pipe a whirl of cream on top of each bun. Sprinkle a little grated chocolate over each whirl and top with a black cherry.

MINT AND CHOCOLATE CHIP BUNS

Preparation time 20 minutes plus 5 minutes for decoration

MAKES ABOUT 18

100g (4oz) soft margarine
100g (4oz) caster sugar
2 eggs, beaten
75g (3oz) self-raising flour
15g (½oz) cocoa powder
50g (2oz) plain chocolate, finely chopped
2tsp peppermint essence

FOR DECORATION
10 chocolate mints crisps

1 Grease 18 bun tins or line them with paper cases. Set the oven to 190°C/375°F/ Gas Mark 5.
2 Beat the margarine and sugar together until light and fluffy.
3 Gradually beat in the eggs, a little at a time.
4 Sift the flour and cocoa powder together and gently fold into the mixture. Stir in the chopped chocolate and peppermint essence.
5 Divide the mixture evenly between the bun tins and bake for 15-20 minutes or until the buns feel firm to the fingertips.
6 Just before the buns are ready to come out of the oven, cut the mints in half. As soon as the buns are cooked, place half a mint on top of each one. Leave to cool on a wire rack.

CHOCOLATE CRISPIES WITH PEANUT BUTTER

Preparation time 20 minutes

MAKES ABOUT 18

4 digestive biscuits
25g (1oz) butter
1 level tbsp crunchy peanut butter
1½ level tbsp cocoa powder
50g (2oz) icing sugar
2tbsp golden syrup
50g (2oz) butter
50g (2oz) puffed rice cereal

1 Place 16 paper cases in bun tins to give support. Put the digestive biscuits inside a plastic bag and crush finely with a rolling pin.
2 Soften the butter, beat in the peanut butter, then stir in the crushed digestives. Refrigerate the mixture for 30 minutes.
3 Roll the peanut butter mixture into small balls and place one in each paper case.
4 Put the cocoa powder, icing sugar, golden syrup and butter together in a heavy-based pan. Melt slowly over a low heat without boiling.
5 Stir the cereal into the cocoa mixture until they are evenly coated. Place large spoonfuls in each paper case, making sure the peanut butter is completely covered. Leave to set before serving.